

# The Caregivers' Newsletter of the



MAY 2018

199 County Road DF – Juneau, Wisconsin

920-386-3580 or 800-924-6407

## Is this Newsletter for You??

The things that you do often seem like the regular tasks you do as a spouse, friend, son or daughter, and you don't think of yourself as a caregiver.

*If you don't recognize that you are a caregiver, you may fail to recognize the impact on your health and well-being that caregiving demands can have.*

Examples of caregivers:

- A wife who has taken over paying the bills because her husband is no longer able to manage the checkbook due to dementia.
- A son who takes time off from work to take his mother to her doctors' appointments.
- A daughter who runs errands and picks up prescriptions for her mother.
- A grandmother in her 70's who is the sole support for her 12-year-old grandson.
- A neighbor who occasionally looks in on a forgetful older gentleman living alone.
- A husband who has stopped participating in his favorite recreational activity because of the time he spends caring for his wife.
- A son and his wife who manage his parents' care while they reside in a skilled nursing facility.



AND A FAVORITE QUOTE:

Life doesn't have to be perfect to be wonderful.

-Annette Funicello

## Help for caregivers is available in many different ways:

Powerful Tools  
FOR Caregivers

For more information on Powerful Tools for Caregivers,  
including when the next class starts, call the ADRC

- \* Proven effective, this 90 minute class runs for six weeks and helps those who are caring for someone learn to:
  - Reduce stress
  - Improve self-confidence
  - Better communicate feelings
  - Locate helpful resources
  - Increase their ability to make tough decisions
- \* 24 hour call-in line - **Alzheimer's Association** 800-272-3900 (always answered by a person)
- \* **Free telephone learning sessions.** (register ahead by calling 866-390-6491) different subjects each time. <http://caregiversos.org/caregiver-teleconnection/> Also starting a *Caregiver Telephone Support Group* that meets for eight weeks at a time. Call 866-390-6491
- \* **Veterans Caregiver Support Line** - 855-260-3274
- \* Visit **Caregiver Connection** on Facebook
- \* Find tools at: <http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/caregivers-resources/grp-checklists-forms.aspx>
- \* Online help from **AARP**: <http://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/>
- \* **Call the ADRC 920-386-3580**

# Caregiving Will End

Taking care of a loved one takes a lot of time and energy. Your own needs move lower on the priority list as you spend more time caring for your loved one. You start saying no to the weekly coffee clutch, decrease the number of days you participate in volunteer or paid work, leave your favorite hobbies on the shelf, and slow down your travel plans. As your loved one needs more and more assistance, it is tempting to just drop out of everything so you can be there for the person as much as possible.

While giving up things you enjoy seems like a good idea at the time, it has negative consequences. The stress of intense caregiving can put your physical and mental health at risk now and leave you vulnerable when your role as caregiver is over. When deciding what activities to give up to be a caregiver, don't just think about your life situation now but also ask yourself the question, "What will I do when I am no longer needed as a caregiver?"

I have been spending a lot of time thinking about what a caregiver's life is like when caregiving ends. The death of my father left my mom with an entirely new life ahead of her. She went from having her days filled with caring for my dad to a world in which she lives alone. For several years she put her activities on hold and put Dad's needs first. During that time, I encouraged Mom to keep doing some of those things she really loved, even if it was infrequently. At the time, my hope was to keep her healthier and happier by designating time out of the week for herself but now I see that keeping active in those activities was important in another way, too. Finding a new routine for her life now is a little easier because she remained involved with those activities.

No matter what, life after caregiving will be a transition and will be a difficult adjustment. Here are some points to consider to help you when your job as a caregiver has ended.

- Begin thinking about your future when you are still a caregiver. Having some long-term dreams and goals will make this transitional time easier.
- Accept and express your feelings of loss, loneliness, and whatever else you may be feeling – keep attending your caregiver support group, join a grief support group, or find a trusted friend to share with. Seek help from a counselor if your grief leaves you overwhelmed by feelings of depression or hopelessness.
- Reconnect with things and people you used to be involved with.
- Look for new challenges – a new job, volunteer work, or planning a trip somewhere you've always wanted to go will help you focus on positive things.
- Keep busy but allow for quiet times to grieve. Reflect on what you've been through, be proud of the good work you did for your loved one, and let go of any guilt you may feel.
- Give yourself time to find your way. Change is the name of the game – reshaping your life and creating a "new normal" is what you need to do, but it is not done overnight.

Even if you don't want to think about the death of your loved one, start creating a plan for what your life will be like after caregiving has ended. It isn't selfish to look at the future in which your caregiving role is over; it is simply practical and healthy. If you are able, involve your loved one in this discussion as they most likely want you to be happy, too. Life after caregiving happens and it may even include a new, fulfilling adventure.

Adapted from an article by Jane Mahoney Older Americans Act Consultant Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources

## More FAVORITE CAREGIVER TIPS

- \* It's spring! Get outside at least a few minutes a day. Breathe deeply – you are taking care of you.
- \* Connect with other caregivers as well as old friends
- \* Make plans for the future – get help doing so if you don't know what to do
- \* Just leaving the house is linked to longevity in older adults



**\*\*LAUGH!\*\***

